

# THE BUCKWHEAT GROWERS ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA

NEWSLETTER NO. 9

WINTER – DECEMBER, 2011-JANUARY, 2012

A Farmer Owned and Operated Cooperative—  
*Organic certified with OCIA Intl.*  
Looking forward to another year in business!!

## WINTER 2011-12

### Thank you to our Customers!

We would like to take a moment at the beginning of this newsletter to express our sincere appreciation to all our customers and vendors who make our business possible.

We hope you all had a very Merry Christmas and we wish you the best for a prosperous and Happy New Year!

### 2011 Production

2011 was a busy and successful year for the mill. The mill produced 447 tons of feed from January through November of 2011. Organic production accounted for 68% and transitional production was 32% of that tonnage. Livestock feed production was 359 tons with whole grain production at 87 tons.

Poultry feed accounted for a large portion of the tonnage produced. Sixty two tons of chick grower was the leading feed produced. That was split about half and half between organic and transitional. Forty tons of chicken layer was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most produced feed (again about half organic and half transitional), with thirty tons of swine grower the third highest in demand.

### Board of Directors

Tom Bilek (Aldrich) -Chairman  
Mike Sams (Staples) -Vice Chairman  
Jeff Nardello (Sebeka) -Secretary/Treasurer  
Glen Borgerding (Albany)  
Floyd Hardy (Brainerd)  
Al Holmquist (Clarissa)  
Rod Mursu (New York Mills)

Tom continues to fill the role of Manager and Board Chair for the business. He can be reached by phone at the Mill (218) 631-9212 or on his Cell (218) 639-2312.



*“The best fertilizer on the land is the footsteps of the owner.” --Aristotle*

## Grain Cleaning at BGA

Cleaning is available for:

**Rye/Vetch**

**Triticale/Vetch**

**Oats**

**Barley**

**Wheat**

**Peas**

**Flax**

### Inside this issue .....Page

2011 Production .....	1
Board .....	1
Grain Cleaning .....	1
Crop Rotation and Its Benefits.....	2
From Tom’s Corner.....	3
Organic Beef Info Meeting.....	3
Soil Fertility & Crop Production....	4
Soil & Fertilizer Info Meeting.....	4
Early Seed Purchase Discounts ....	4
Event Schedule .....	5

## CROP ROTATION AND ITS BENEFITS



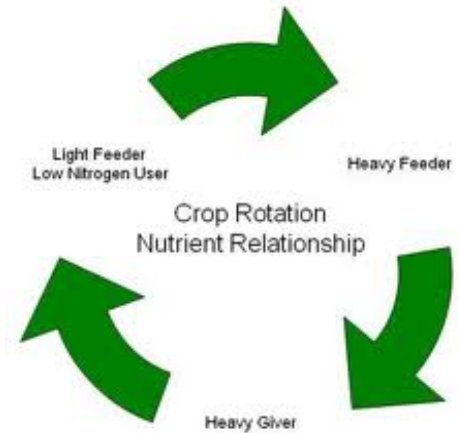
Crop rotation is a planned order of specific crops planted on the same field. Crop rotation also means that succeeding crops are of a different genus, species, subspecies, or variety than the previous crop. Examples would be barley after wheat, row crops after small grains, grain crops after legumes, etc. The planned rotation sequence may be for a two- or three-year or longer period. Some of the general purposes of rotations are to improve or maintain soil fertility, reduce erosion, reduce the build-up of pests, spread the workload, reduce risk of weather damage, reduce reliance on agricultural chemicals, and increase net profits.

One immediate economic benefit of crop rotations is improved yields. For example, sunflower yields over eight years at Crookston, Minnesota were often significantly greater in rotation with other crops than when continuous sunflower was grown. Wheat yields were also greater with rotation than continuous wheat in an eight-year study conducted with different crops at Fargo. A study at the Agriculture Research Service at Mandan has shown that increased hard red spring wheat yields can be expected when an alternative crop is included in the rotation.

Even greater benefits are usually obtained by rotating two distinctly unrelated crops, such as a small grain seeded into land where the previous crop was a legume or other herbaceous dicot such as flax or sunflower.

Beneficial effects that can be obtained from a well planned crop rotation are:

- ❖ Reduced insect and disease problems
- ❖ Beneficial residual herbicide carryover
- ❖ Improved soil fertility
- ❖ Improvements in soil tilth and aggregate stability
- ❖ Soil water management
- ❖ Reduction of soil erosion
- ❖ Reduction of allelopathic or phytotoxic effects



When selecting a rotation, the long term viability of that rotation to reduce weed, insect and disease pressure, as well as its economic viability must be considered. A well developed plan which can be altered when necessary should always be followed. Otherwise, the desired crop sequence may be interrupted and the maximum benefits of the rotational effect will not be obtained.

The following are important to consider when designing a crop rotation, regardless of location:

**How will the previous crop affect subsequent crop production?**

**Will the previous crop increase or decrease concerns in the following areas?**

- ❖ Disease management
- ❖ Insect management
- ❖ Weed control and volunteer crop control
- ❖ Resistant weed management
- ❖ Herbicide carryover
- ❖ Residue management
- ❖ Soil moisture returns
- ❖ Seedbed preparation
- ❖ Harvest and planting schedule
- ❖ Frost risk
- ❖ Gross economic returns

This information was reprinted with permission from the NDSU Agriculture website  
[www.ag.ndsu.edu](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu).

*Crop Rotations for Increased Productivity* by **Dr. Michael D. Peel**, NDSU Small Grains Extension Agronomist



## From Tom's Corner:

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Greetings from the Buckwheat Growers. Well, another year is gone. It sure has been a *different* year. Wet and cold! Started out wet and was still wet in August. When it dried up, it stayed dry to December.

Pricing on feed grains, even at harvest time, started out at a good price and is still on the way up. Organic grain will be in short supply. Even at the end of December, organic peas, barley, and triticale are hard to find. The corn price has gone past affordable for many family dairy farmers. The poultry market is the driving market on the feed end and only that can go so high before we lose our end buyers. Seed supplies are short. Early varieties of seed corn are pretty much sold out or spoken for. Eighty-seven day corn is currently the shortest variety available.

2011 was a pretty poor growing year for the small grains and buckwheat. North Dakota was unable to plant over 1 million acres do to the continuous wet and cold spring. Small grain harvests of oats, barley, rye, and some spring wheat tested very lightweight with poor germination. The buckwheat harvest was about half a crop and was very poor quality.

Looking at production records for 2011, we are down on dairy blends by approximately 100 ton from 2010. This is a reflection of high organic whole grain prices. On the upside, poultry feed sales have increased from 2010.

We are anticipating an increase in seed sales for spring of 2012. With better spring weather than we had in 2011, oats, barley, field peas, and buckwheat seed sales should increase for the new planting season.

Our annual Organic Inspection was held on December 16. Everything went extremely well and we are awaiting notification of our 2012 certification.



### CHECK THE EVENT LIST

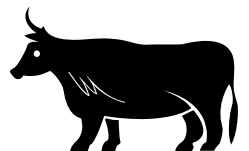
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The less hectic winter months are a great time to take in a conference or a trade show. It's an excellent opportunity to catch up on all that's new in organic farming. Be sure to check the event list on page 5 for a listing of conferences, trade shows, and other items of interest.

The Minnesota Organic Conference is being held January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> at the River's Edge Convention Center (formerly the St .Cloud Civic Center). If you get the chance, we'd love to have you stop and visit our booth!



### Organic Beef Growers Interest Meeting



For all those attending the Upper Midwest Organic Conference at La Crosse, Wisconsin February 23-25, 2012, there will be an organic beef interest meeting on Thursday, Feb 23 from 4:00 to 5:30 at the Courtyard by Marriot Hotel, 500 Front Street S, La Crosse. This meeting is a coordinated effort of Buckwheat Growers Assn and the OFarm network.

Representatives from several organic beef buying companies have been invited to attend. Their acceptance is pending and will be confirmed in the next couple of weeks. Check the Buckwheat Growers Assn website [www.buckwheatgrowers.com](http://www.buckwheatgrowers.com) for further updates. Anyone interested in the production of organic beef, please access the website or contact us at 218-631-9212.

## Soil Fertility and Crop Production By: Glen Borgerding

As most farmers already realize, soil fertility plays an important role in crop production. Variations in soil types and cropping systems (rotations) can impact what nutrients are necessary to achieve optimum crop quality and yield. Rather than one size fits all programs, it is best to design fertilizer programs around the nutrients that need to be supplemented for the soils and crops in question. Several decades ago, as part of the so-called “Green Revolution”, the conventional approach was to focus predominantly on N-K-P or Nitrogen, -Phosphorus, and Potash in fertilizer programs. Over the years it became apparent that the secondary and trace nutrients were being drawn down and supplementation of these nutrients (including Sulfur, Calcium, Magnesium Zinc, Boron, as well as others) may also be necessary to maintain high production levels. The best way to determine what nutrient levels a field has and needs is through soil testing. Now admittedly, soil testing is not a perfect science and misinterpretations of soil analysis abound, but it is still the best tool available to assist us in the formulation of cost effective fertilizer programs.

Fertilizer costs have soared dramatically over the past decade and it is more important than ever to get a return on your fertilizer investment. In other words, if you spend \$75 per acre on a fertility program, you had better get at least that much back. On the other hand, raising crops on poorly fertilized soil can easily reduce yields by 50-75 percent particularly on lighter textured, low testing soils. It is important to identify your fields most yield limiting factors and if they are fertility related than fertilizer is a good investment.

So the best place to start is with a soil test. These should be kept current within 3 years. Also consider your crop rotation to track any N credits from previous legume crops. Manure additions can also add significant nutrients to your cropping system that may replace the need for additional fertilizer. After you’ve made these calculations and determined the remaining nutrient requirements that need to be supplemented by fertilizer, it will be a pretty safe bet that you will get a good return on your fertilizer investment. Stop by at the Buckwheat Growers Assn. for some soil sample bags and the use of their soil sampling probe to get started. Compared to the price of fertilizer, soil tests are a real bargain.



### Seed and Fertilizer Information Meeting

There will be a Seed and Fertilizer Information meeting held at Ted and Gen’s in Aldrich on Saturday, January 21. Registration is at 10:30 with a lunch to be served at noon. Glen Borgerding will be giving a presentation on soil nutrients and crop rotation. It is anticipated that seed will be in short supply this spring. Early seed reservation and pre-paying is necessary this year to be sure you get the seed you need.



### Early Seed Purchase Discounts

Order your seed early and receive a cash discount. Seed orders placed and prepaid by May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012 will be eligible for discounts. The earlier you place your order, the larger the discount!



# UPCOMING EVENTS - 2012

**January 7<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) – Central Chapter Annual Meeting**  
(10:00 AM – 2:00 PM) at the Community Center, Browerville, MN - Contact Mel at (218) 894-2715 or Jim at [islandlakefarm@brainerd.net](mailto:islandlakefarm@brainerd.net) - Registration is \$10.00/person - includes lunch.

**January 7<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) Crow River Chapter Annual Meeting**  
(10:00 AM - registration at 9:00 AM) *Rotations: Animals, Vegetables, Partnerships* - at Gale Woods Farm, 7210 County Road 110 W, Minnetrista, MN 55364 - Registration-\$40/person [www.sfa-mn.org/crow-river](http://www.sfa-mn.org/crow-river)  
Contact: Jerry at (320) 543-3394 or [jerry@sfa-mn.org](mailto:jerry@sfa-mn.org)

**January 12<sup>th</sup> (Thursday) Pre-Conference Workshops** at the River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud (formerly the St. Cloud Civic Center).

Offered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture

- **Honey Bees and Beekeeping** (1:00-5:00 PM – Registration-\$25);
- **Post-Harvest Handling, Food Safety, and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) Certification: Making it Work on Real Vegetable Farms** (9:00 AM – 5:00 PM – Registration-\$40);

A brochure and registration materials for the Bees and Veggie Safety workshops are available at [www.mda.state.mn.us/amd](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/amd) or by calling 651-201-6012.

Offered by the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA)

- **All About Selling Meat** (9:00 AM – 4:30 PM – Registration \$40/person);

A brochure is available at [www.misa.umn.edu](http://www.misa.umn.edu) or by calling 800-909-6472.

**January 13<sup>th</sup> & 14<sup>th</sup> (Friday & Saturday) MN Organic Conference** at River's Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud (formerly the St. Cloud Civic Center). Featured speakers: Elaine Ingham, President and Director of Research at Soil Foodweb Inc.; Charles Benbrook, Chief Scientist at the Organic Center; Jim Goodman, Journalist and WI Organic Beef/Dairy Farmer; plus dozens of practical workshops, large trade show, opportunities to organic farmers, and organic meals! Contact: Mary Hanks 651-201-6012 or (800) 967-2474 or [Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us](mailto:Mary.Hanks@state.mn.us) or Meg Moynihan [Meg.Moynihan@state.mn.us](mailto:Meg.Moynihan@state.mn.us) (651) 201-6012

**January 13<sup>th</sup> (Friday) 5:30 pm - OCIA MN #1 Chapter Annual Membership Meeting**  
Le St. Germain Hotel (formerly Radisson), 404 West St. Germain, St. Cloud MN  
Contact: Lorri Ann Hartel [lhartel@prairieagcomm.com](mailto:lhartel@prairieagcomm.com) (218) 253-4907 or DeEtta Bilek [deebilek@wcta.net](mailto:deebilek@wcta.net) (218) 445-5475

**January 20<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> (Friday & Saturday) Upper Midwest Regional Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference & Trade Show** at the St. Cloud Civic Center-MN - Contact: [www.mfvga.org](http://www.mfvga.org) / 763-434-0400

**January 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> (Friday & Saturday) NPSAS 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Winter Conference** – at Ramkota, Aberdeen, SD [www.npsas.org](http://www.npsas.org) (701) 883-4304

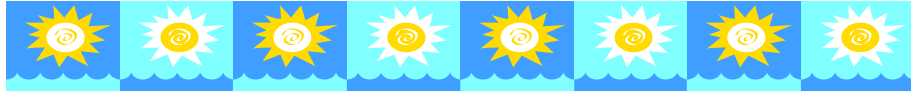
**February 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> (Friday & Saturday) Sustainable Farming Association of MN Annual Conference** at St. Ben's in St. Joseph, MN [www.sfa-mn.org](http://www.sfa-mn.org) Contact: John Mesko at (763) 260-0209 [john@sfa-mn.org](mailto:john@sfa-mn.org)  
The keynote speaker at this year's conference will be [Dr. Val Farmer](#), an expert on rural mental health issues and the unique psychological problems farmers face living and working in rural areas.

**February 20<sup>th</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> (Monday-Wednesday) - OCIA Intl Annual General Membership Meeting (AGMM)**  
Radisson Hotel, LaCrosse, WI - OCIA MN #1 Chapter is co-hosting with WI Chapter - Contact: Lorri Ann Hartel [lhartel@prairieagcomm.com](mailto:lhartel@prairieagcomm.com) (218) 253-4907 or DeEtta Bilek [deebilek@wcta.net](mailto:deebilek@wcta.net) (218) 445-5475

**February 23<sup>rd</sup> (Thursday) Livestock Marketing Meeting** at the La Crosse WI Marriott Hotel (4:00 PM – 5:00 PM) Sponsored by OFARM and the Buckwheat Growers of Minnesota.  
Contact Tom Bilek 218-631-9212 or [tom@bilekzone.com](mailto:tom@bilekzone.com)

**February 23<sup>rd</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> (Thursday, Friday, Saturday) Upper Midwest Organic Conference**, LaCrosse, WI <http://www.mosesorganic.org/conference.html> --- OCIA MN #1 and OCIA Intl will exhibit at this event.

**May 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> (Saturday & Sunday) Living Green Expo** at the MN State Fairgrounds  
Contact: [info@livinggreenexpo.mn](mailto:info@livinggreenexpo.mn) (651) 290-0154



## BUCKWHEAT GROWERS ASSOCIATION OF MN

MISSION STATEMENT — To provide an opportunity for farmers to learn more about growing and harvesting buckwheat and other alternative crops and to add value to these crops by processing and marketing as a group of growers.

- The Buckwheat Growers Assn of MN incorporated in 1997, organized by a group of farmers to market buckwheat.
- The business expanded in the fall of 2000, with the purchase of the feed mill in Wadena.



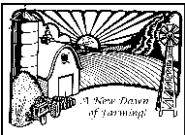
*Buckwheat Growers Association is proud to be OCIA certified.  
Organic Certified with OCIA Intl. to Process/Manufacture Feed for Livestock & Clean/Bag Grain*

**Hours Open: Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

Please call ahead if you want a larger order of our products so that we may serve you more efficiently.

**Phone: 218-631-9212 ---- Our Fax number has been changed to 218-631-1711**

E-mail us at [info@buckwheatgrowers.com](mailto:info@buckwheatgrowers.com) Visit us on the web at [www.buckwheatgrowers.com](http://www.buckwheatgrowers.com)



**The BUCKWHEAT GROWERS**  
ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA

206 Aldrich Ave SE  
Wadena MN 56482

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Website: [www.buckwheatgrowers.com](http://www.buckwheatgrowers.com)

E-Mail: [info@buckwheatgrowers.com](mailto:info@buckwheatgrowers.com)